

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE:

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1. Western broadcasts are the only source of factual information for the people of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs look forward to these broadcasts, and it is my opinion that the over-all effect of the broadcasts is good. Only a small number of Czech families do not have radios, and they eventually hear about the broadcasts from their fellow workers, neighbors, close friends, or relatives. Listening to foreign broadcasts is not forbidden, but spreading what one has heard on the broadcasts is punishable by law.
2. I estimate that as of June 1952, 80% of all radio receivers in Czechoslovakia were capable of receiving foreign broadcasts; the remaining 20% were not equipped with short wave. During World War II, the Germans ordered that the 25X1X short wave units had to be removed from radios. radio sets had to be registered with the postal authorities, and a monthly tax of approximately 20 crowns had to be paid to the postal authorities on each set. Resistors, condensers, both rotary and stationary, transformers, suppressors, and cabinets were all in ample supply from war surplus stocks, but there was a serious shortage of radio tubes for replacement. All radio tubes were repaired by a branch of the former Phillips concern on Karlova Namesti in Prague. Because of this, amateur radio repairmen were doing a flourishing business. It seemed to me that an effort was being made to replace all radio sets of foreign manufacture (primarily German and American) with Tesla products. Tesla radios were usually very good, but quite expensive.

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(Note: Washington Distribution Indicated By "X"; Field Distribution By "#")

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3. The Czechs listened to almost all of the foreign broadcasts, particularly those between 1800 and 2400 hours and early in the morning. Jamming, of course, had the effect of cutting down listening but it was not as effective in some localities as others; it was particularly bad in Prague. Some listeners used earphones which seemed to lessen the effectiveness of jamming. Using earphones had the added advantage of preventing those around you from knowing to what you were listening. Jamming seemed to be strongest during weekends and until midnight. I heard talk about the stationary and mobile jamming stations built by the Government; their design and efficiency allegedly was better than that of the German stations during World War II.
4. From their experiences in World War II, the people learned to avoid being caught listening to foreign broadcasts. My radio was not powerful enough to receive Western broadcasts, in addition to which I was afraid that the police would pay me a surprise visit, so I visited friends to listen or was kept informed by people whom I trusted. The house next door to me was occupied by StB officials and on many occasions I heard VOA and BBC broadcasts through the wall between the two houses.
5. In my opinion, foreign broadcasts are the most effective means of propaganda for people behind the Iron Curtain that has been used up to this time. VOA, RFE, BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Service, and Radio Rome could be heard even in the most remote portions of Czechoslovakia, and the programs were generally well liked. This was particularly true of VOA, BBC, and RFE. Some of the Czechs thought of RFE as the voice of emigrants and nothing else, although RFE always seemed to be well informed on events in Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, on VOA they heard Czech-Americans. The most unfavorable thing I ever heard about VOA was that the broadcasts were so badly jammed by the Communists.
6. On the whole I was satisfied with VOA broadcasts, but I do know that the Czechs would like more news with commentaries; some people were not able to listen regularly and therefore could not make a true analysis on the basis of partial facts. In my opinion, VOA should avoid too much praise of America and the West and stress the bad conditions in Czechoslovakia. VOA should make every effort to keep up with the latest events in Czechoslovakia. Those who prepare the broadcasts should know Czechoslovakia; they should keep in touch with events in that country by listening to broadcasts from Prague, reading Czech newspapers and talking to those who have escaped from that country.
7. Although the Czechs do not want to hear too much praise of the US, they do want to hear how the people in the US live, what they are able to buy with their wages, how their homes are equipped, etc. The Communists attempt to degrade everything that can be termed "American" and continually criticize the American way of life. They often find material for their propaganda mills in Western broadcasts; for instance the musical programs of jazz or beebop which are broadcast as "something special". To the American public, such music may be something special, but it does not appeal to the average Czech. The Communists point to this type of music as the only type of music enjoyed by Americans. Regardless of how much fun the Communist gag writers poke at the US, the Czechs will retain their good impressions of the US, they will still regard the US as "first" in everything, and will have faith in the strength and help of the US. The Czechs look to broadcasts from the West to tell them what steps the West is taking in the long process to liberate those behind the Iron Curtain, but they do not expect miracles. The Czechs do not like obvious propaganda, whether from Moscow, their own government, or the West. One of the reasons that the propaganda from Moscow has had so little effect is that the Communists do not realize the high cultural level of the Czechs.

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8. I would like to make the following suggestions to be taken into consideration in preparing broadcasts for the Czech people:
- a. All Communist charges should be answered by the West with facts. If these charges go unanswered, the people begin to think that the charge is true, or that the West is not capable of giving suitable answer.
 - b. The Czechs want to hear news of what is going on in the other Satellites -- but they want facts.
 - c. The people of Czechoslovakia are always eager to hear the true facts about those who have succeeded in fleeing their country; how they were received by the West, and how they are making a living.
 - d. Communist tyrants should be denounced by name and with facts at every opportunity.
 - e. News programs and commentaries should be repeated so that the greatest percentage of the people would have an opportunity to hear them.
 - f. From time to time, the embargoes levelled against Czechoslovakia by the US and other Western countries should be explained; the reasons for such economic measures should be spelled out. As I recall, nothing was ever said on this subject by the West; the only time it was mentioned was by the Communists in their "hate America" campaign.
 - g. Humor would be greatly appreciated by the Czechs; the Czech comedian, Kohout, is well-liked.
 - h. The Czechs particularly like the semi-classical music of such composers as Kern, Gershwin, Herbert, Romberg, and Friml. They like the modern music of Benny Goodman, Glen Miller, and Leroy Anderson. In the classical vein, they like Dvorak, Smetana, Kubelik, Rudolph Firkusny, Jarmila Novotna. Until recently VOA broadcast a program by Pani Eva (Mrs. Eva) every evening about midnight. The program was 15 minutes of modern American jazz. This music was unpleasant to the Czechs, who did not understand it; I and most of the people I knew switched the radio off when Pani Eva came on.

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